

New Historicist Reading
of David Hare's
Stuff Happens

By:

Dr. Asmaa A. El-Sherbini

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New Historicism is one of the most conspicuous trends in the recent history of contemporary literary and cultural theory. With Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, New Historicism began to appear in 1980s as another critical return to focusing on the importance of historical context to understand literature. The main concern of this paper is to reinterpret Hare's *Stuff Happens* in the light of New Historicism; or rather to reinterpret *Stuff Happens* in the light of non-literary texts, the thing which will point out the original ideology of the text. This maintains that the text is manipulated as an event that has a very dangerous implication and significance.

Historicism is defined as "a way of looking at life and the world...but it is not a deterministic philosophy of history. Life is too fluid and too concrete for that Historicism is historicizing of life and enlivening of history" (Lee and Beck 571). Both Lee and Beck attribute the value of everything to history. Old historicism takes history to be a background to literature. History – in this case – is of a secondary importance and the text is given the primary importance because it mirrors the history of its time.

Louis Montrose defines New Historicism as "a combined interest in the textuality of history and the historicity of texts" (172), and history – in this way – is not a set of fixed facts, but – like literature with which it interacts, a text which needs to be interpreted. So, a text – whether literary or historical – is a form of discourse that consists of "representations" – that is verbal formations which are the ideological or cultural products of an era" (Abrams, 249). The cultural and ideological representations in texts serve to produce as -Abrams says - "the power structure of domination and subordination that characterize a given community" (249).

To New Historicists, texts are not self – contained. Texts must identify and expose :

the covert ideology implicated in a work's manifest or ostensible meanings, and so to unravel, or penetrate through the web of illusions generated by that ideology, which disguise, when they do not entirely displace the economic, social and political realities of its time and place. (Abrams, 368).

When relations of power within a culture are pointed out, this will lead to a better understanding of the past and the present.

New Historicism provides two techniques of treating literary texts. The first is by relating literary texts to non-literary texts. Both texts are interpreted as an expression of the same historical structure. The second is by relating it to history, sociology and politics. "This reveals literary texts as political acts and historical events....(and) can be used to explain a cultural and political logic of its time" (Brannigan, 53). According to Vesser, the most important achievement of New Historicism is not that it treats literary and non-literary texts equally, nor is it that it rejects the objectivity of history or the universality of human nature. The real achievement of New Historicism is that it regards man differently. *Man is not an essence, he is a construct* and New historicist critics seek to know what constructs him in order to understand him better (9-12). Every thing is shaped by the different surroundings and New Historicist critics are after tracing the relation of power involved in the shaping process of man.

New Historicists are greatly affected by the French historian, Michael Foucault and the American social anthropologist, Clifford Geertz and their concepts of history, discourse and power relations. It is power that determines the truth of any discourse. Accordingly, as Selden says "there are no absolutely true discourses", only more or less powerful discourses" (102). These powerful discourses fit the description of truth laid down by "the intellectual or political authorities of the day, by the members of the ruling elite or by the prevailing ideologies of knowledge" (Selden, 100). Hence, it seems obvious that Bush's speeches in *Stuff Happens* are true because they are powerful. The world of the text – in this case as Veenstra argues – is interpreted in ideological terms; in terms of Foucault's concept of power which does not allow of a dissociation of "the world of the text" from the world of socio – historical context. Discourse is never free from the social structure in which it is embedded and in which it acquires meaning.

To New Historicists, the literary work is the creation of a free author who possesses a unique identity. Abrams sees that the author is able to retain a free identity in spite of the fact that he is produced by the

play of power and ideology in his society. (251). Like the authors; as Abrams says;

the readers will try to naturalize the text – that is – interpret its cultural representations as though they were universal features of human experience. In so far as the reader's ideology differs from that of the writer, they will appropriate the text – interpret it so as to make it conform to their own cultural possessions (251).

As mentioned before, one of the most important features of New Historicism is to treat literary and non-literary texts equally. Greenblatt, one of the main new historicists, usually starts his analysis of any literary text with just an extract, not a whole document, from a non-literary text to reveal power relations, and "the subversive role which literature plays in culture" (Veenstra 182). This paper presents a New Historicist reading of David Hare's *Stuff Happens*. In other words the play will be interpreted in the light of extracts from, non-literary texts, namely; *The New Rulers of the World* by John Pilger, *Inverted Totalitarianism: How the Bush Administration is Effecting the Transformation to a Facist State* by Sheldon Wolin, and *"The So-called War on Terror": A Masterpiece of Propaganda* by Richard W. Behan. The three previously mentioned works present an explanation of the reasons of war on Iraq. This maintains that the real ideology of the text will be highlighted and that the text is manipulated as an event that has a dangerous intention and significance.

David Hare wrote intricate political dramas, as *Plenty* and *A Map of the World*, in which he is mainly concerned with "where do we locate and how do we sustain value" (Billington 2). More importantly, Hare is mainly concerned with power abuse and its destructive blind effect on people. *Stuff Happens* is a different play as it concentrates on very recent history and its main characters are George Bush and the key members of his administration: Wolfowitz, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney and the British Prime Minister: Tony Blair. Add to this, most of these characters quote the public statements of politicians verbatim. Even the title of the play, *Stuff Happens*, is inspired by Donald Rumsfeld's response to widespread looting in Baghdad:

Stuff Happens and it's untidy and freedom untidy and free people are free to make mistakes and do bad things (Hare, Stuff Happens, 3)

Critics consider this play a documentary work of art that lacks imagination and significance since audience are aware of what is said and done. Hare admits that when he had started to think of a dramatic approach suitable to the scale of events, he found that: "...this could not be a documentary play". Hare adds saying:

Although I planned to stud my narrative with some of real – life remarks that the principal characters had made in public, I had to acknowledge the obvious fact that once the doors closed on Bush Blair, on Blix, on Rice and Kofi Annan, no body on earth truly knew what they had said behind them. It was up to me to invent" (Hare, *Stuff Happens*, 2009, 3)

Hare's assertion of the existence of some fictional parts in the play helps in pointing out the multi-dimentional meanings implied in the play that challenge the general attitude. Westgate regards *Stuff Happens* as a necessary source of controversy about the Iraqi war. By controversy he means that "it confronts audiences with the plausibility of an alternative epistemotogical paradigm-whether what is known or how it is known-that redefines general assumptions or attitude"(403). Richard Boon sees the play differently. He sees that from "a position of cultural supremacism than from a more humane and moral American tradition of political can – do"(3), David Hare presents his opposition to the war behind a mask of cool ironic detachment.

To start with, the title itself, which is inspired by Rumsfeld's words, is "an expression of American Hubris and imperial contempt" (Guart, 1). It is an indication of love of power that is blind of moral values and human rights. As Quart says "they are unscrupulous men driven by a goal regime – change in Iraq, and nothing, neither the UN nor old Europe will move them from their inexorable and murderous course"⁽³⁾. On the other hand the title implies that "Stuff does happen because some people want it to, others are ineffectual to stop it and still others are blind to the outcomes that follow from their imperfectly thought-out choices and decision" (Daniszewski, nop.). What is ironic is that this imperialistic desire is covered with issues of democracy and war on terror.

The play starts with Colin powell's "war should be the politics of last resort" (Hare, *Stuff Happens*, 5) These seemingly honest reasonable words are difficult to prove true especially when George Bush's first words are:

My faith frees me to put the problem of the moment in a proper perspective. Frees me to make decisions which others might not like. Frees me to enjoy life and not worry about what comes next."8".

Bush ascertains that he is free to take the decision he likes to "ensure his nation's security" (He) will not wait on events while danger gathers andwill not stand by as peril draws closer and closer(9). George Bush's use of the obligatory "will do" in "All nations should know America will do what is necessary to ensure.....security", is an indicative of the strong and powerful intention of some politicians or of America to hit Iraq not merely because of "War on Terror" but because of their thirst for power. Bush chose Iraq – as Hare says – to prove that "he could". No better reason than that "Because I can I will" (Hare, *Don't Look for a Reason*, 1).

Blind power has to be masked and justified. First, America has to get support from other nations. Blair is an ally who ascertains, together with Bush, that "the world is in a state of flux and that necessitates reordering it"⁽³⁶⁾. So, Al Qaeda and Taliban had to be attacked to convince people that what they need is only war on terror!

To move the focus to Iraq, Bush and his allies had to propagate the false notion that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction and to argue that Hussein is a danger to the whole world! As a result, Bush does his best to get the approval of the other European countries.

Bush makes a speech at a marine base where he repudiates one of the core ideas of the UN charter that forbids the use of force not undertaken in self – defence. He introduces a concept new to international law: The doctrine of the preemptive strike. (Hare, *Stuff Happens*, 2009, 6).

What is ironic is that Iraq has already proved that she owns no destructive weapons. Only in 1991 two companies; one is American and the other is French supplied Iraq with seventeen types of biological agents. Hare's strength here, as Ascherson says, is that "the audience's tendency to laughter is reduced to uneasy silence especially when Bush presents his justification of the doctrine of preventive war"⁽²⁾. In an article to *The Guardian*, David Hare comments sarcastically on the revolutionary doctrine of the preemptive strike. He says:

(it) has been introduced into international relations, but its use is to be the privilege of one country alone; on no other grounds than that this particular country is so powerful as to be beyond sanction. The UN, which was established...to end the days of military intervention dressed up as humanitarianism has been pushed brutally to the side. From now on, America will do what it damn well pleases; but the messy business of explaining and justifying will be left largely to the other (Hare, "The War on Iraq", 2).

After America's success to win the support of Spain, Britain and France all of them present a second resolution that will authorize America's use of force. What is ironic is that after the success of the invasion and the destruction of Iraq and their declaration that they did not find massive destructive weapons, they refuse to apologize; the thing that forces us to ask for the real reasons of this war as Hare conceived them. Hare says in the opening act of the play:

The inevitable is what will seem to happen to you purely by chance

The Real is what will strike you as really absurd.....

Unless you exclaim – there must be some mistake"–

You must be mistaken. (Hare, Stuff Happens, 3).

In our stifled silence while watching this play, the audience can perceive the real meaning of this "event" or rather text. Whatever is said by Bush and other characters is absurd. Obviously, the play describes the destructive power of America and the subversive impact on those who die as a result. To be consistent with this theme of power, Hare's portrait of Bush is complex. "The smirking Bush may mangle the English language, and play the role of a bumbling, slow-thinking Texas rancher, but this supposedly stupid man uses power cunningly, and is very much in control" (Quart,3). Hare does not underestimate Bush. In his words Bush got everything he wanted out of an operation and Blair, a supposedly clever and gifted man, was destroyed by it.

Hare avoids the trap of agitprop by cannily subverting the play's anti-war bias. Anti-war voices; the Iraqi exile and Palestinian Academic, are so weak to the extent they only lament their ill fate. The driving force of the play is – as Toby Young says:

The articulation not of morality, but of power... power is the only pure ideal expressed in war; Hare seems to imply, and the only one fully examined in the play. It is not so much a political play as a play about politicians, an engrossing dynamic presentation of the political process with all its frustrated intentions and unrealized ambitions(9).

Politicians have their dreams of power through which they fulfill their ambition of power, of fame and of wealth. "They know what they are doing" as Rumsfeld says. They are free to make mistakes, commit crimes and do bad things or even do wonderful things. These imperialistic tendencies are easily implied. This contradicts what Wessendorf says. He sees that *Stuff Happens* "shies away from larger political generalizations such as claiming that the Iraqi war is an example of American imperialism"⁽¹¹⁾. Subversion is quite obvious in Rumsfeld's words about freedom: Powerful people are free to live their life and not be questioned about the manner they approach in doing things and are free to make mistakes even if these mistakes are going to destroy a nation. These mistakes are not as Rumsfeld says "just happen" but they are carefully calculated to prove that "America changed that's what we are told". On September 11th everything changed" (Hare, *Stuff Happens*, 92) simply because, as a Brit in New York says:

"the infantile psychobabble of popular culture is grafted opportunistically onto America's politics. The language of childish entitlement becomes the lethal rhetoric of global wealth and privilege" (Hare A, 92).

Here, Hare creates a kind of internal dialectic to expose and prove "the dubious premises on which the war was fought"(Billington,1). It is important to stress that "if the American population had the slightest idea of what is being done in their name, they would be utterly appalled" (Chomsky, 24). This ignorance is due to the success of the U.S. Media to deceive their people with attractive ideas. Chomsky says "any dictator would admire the uniformity and obedience of the (U.S.) Media"⁽²⁴⁾. Billington adds that this war "questions our complacency by reminding us of the pro-war arguments. A new labour politician... admits that the supposed weapons turned out not to exist and that a military victory was compromised by Sloppy Pentagon planning for peace"⁽¹¹⁾. According to historicism, no dialect is found between the past and the present, only

internal dialect tries to find a fruitful result represented in "the removal of the dictator". If Billington sees this as the only positive result, it seems meaningless. A dictator is removed to be replaced by another one and what is the price? And who has to pay that expensive price? Internal dialect stresses the deluded fantasy upon which war is based. As Powell says "*The whole mess was based on a disastrous, unproven link between Saddam Hussein and al – Qaida.*" (Billington, 20). Even if Saddam Hussien is a dictator, as Hare says, America has "no right to deny a colonial freedom – if there can be such a thing – to those who have known only brutality and suffering" (Hare, "Don't Look for a Reason", 2). No one has the right to move a country from dictatorship to anarchy and foreign occupation.

In *Stuff Happens*, Hare stresses the subversive side of the main characters, namely, Tony Blair and Powell. Blair "who's a humane believer in humane intervention for good purposes i.e the relief of suffering", and Powell who is for his practicality and his tendency to help others are mashed for following the imperialistic powerful tendencies of Bush and his administration. The radical subversion of men and ideals makes the angry journalist says angrily:

What is the word for those who claim to love democracy and yet will not fight to extend democracy to the Arabs as well..." (Hare, Stuff Happens, 31)

The journalist's contemptuous rejection of war is real but insignificant. *People should fight for democracy.* As the Iraqi exile says: "*Don't expect America or any body will do it for you. If you don't do it yourself, this is what you get*"⁽¹²⁰⁾. Indirectly, the Arabs are responsible for the destruction of Iraq because of their weakness.

In a review by Bran Clover about *Stuff Happens* he stresses the repellent nature of those one-dimensional characters and asks "are they stupid??. Definitely, they are not stupid since Hare makes clear the fixed intention of hitting Iraq many years ago:

Bush: We did Afghanistan. Now we move on. The second phase.
What do you feel about a second phase?

Blair: I agree with the idea.

Bush: Good Good. (Hare, *Stuff Happens*, 19).

This fictional dialogue is rendered actual by America's insistence to hit Iraq in spite of the fact that there are no weapons of mass destruction. "*It was all for oil*" as the Palestinian Academic says. He adds "*It's about one thing: defending the interests of America's three-billion-dollar a-year colony in the Middle east*" (Hare, *Stuff Happens*, 57). This means that America is not building "some new world order" out of the ruins of the World Trade Center" and that "*they are not the guardians of an ideal, the guardians of a conscience*" (Hare, *Stuff Happens*, 107). No, America does what she wants simply because *Power does not make deal ...Power does not need to do dealsPower does what it wants* ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾.

All the previous mentioned reasons which are deduced for invading Iraq are emphasized by Reinelt:

Of all the aspects of America's current engagement in Iraq, the "why" of it all remains the most disputed and controversial; It wasn't oil or money, though plenty of profiteering is going on, It was not to take on Al-Qaeda, though that made a good excuse, it was not to stop Saddam from getting WMD, Hare's putative explanation in *Stuff Happens* is that it was in effect all of the above... (p.304).

Add to this America's proud attempt to restore her image after September 11 "*On September 11, America changed. Yes it got much stupider*" (Hare, *Stuff Happens*, 17). Blind use of power may reflect the physical strength of a person but it shows also his arrogance. Subversively, America's use of power is because of the Arab weakness. Though Israel and the Middle East conflict is a minor reason of this war, it has a very interesting significance. Hare directs attention to Bush's support of Ariel Sharon and his disengagement from Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian authority. The Palestinian academic appears only once, what he says is true but few have acknowledged it:

*This is a president whose knowledge of Palestine is confined to one helicopter flight in the company of Sharon, from which he looked down on the suffering of the refugees. This is the double standard: a UN resolution which legitimizes war on Iraq has to be enforced. A resolution which demands Israel withdraw to its 1967 borders has to be ignored. Justice and freedom are the cause of the west- but never extended to a people expelled from their land and forbidden any right to return. Terror is condemned, but state- sanctioned is green lit. (Hare, *Stuff Happens*, 57).*

Duality in dealing with the other is indicative of the blindness of those political leaders in seeing the truth. America is not propagating democracy and freedom but rather imperialistic tendencies. An American mother says:

*I lost my only child in the world Trade Center. I can't describe to you how I will feel for the rest of my life..... They killed three thousand innocent victims How many innocent victims are you and Mr. Bush going to kill when there is no justification? Mr. Blair don't do it. Don't do it (Hare, *Stuff Happens*, 108).*

They did wage the war !! this makes Hare ask wondering:

Three thousand, killed in the Twin Towers. Three thousand, at least, already dead in Iraq. Three thousand, a majority bystanders, dead in the reoccupation of Palestine following the second intifada. Is equivalence achieved? Can we stop there? (Hare, "Don't Look for a Reason", 1).

Definitely, America will not "stop there". Political leaders sometimes do not express their people, they are blind by their passions of ambition, and greed. What is more ironic is that there is an obvious discrepancy between what they say and what they do. What is definite is that they lost their humanity.

In his *book, Practicing New Historicism*, Greenblat differentiates between two kinds of descriptions; thin and thick description. The first is "one merely describing the mute act"⁽²¹⁾; and the second is giving the latter its place in a network of framing intentions and cultural meanings (Greenblat, 21). Thin and thick description is not a matter of complexity or simplicity. It means intention and culture that give these intentions their significance. If Greenblat stresses the necessity of relating the work of art to culture and ideology, this is easily deduced in David Hare's *Stuff-Happens*. Relating the literary text to non-literary texts gives more accurate description of the historical and cultural background of the play and shows the audience the supposed facts of what happened to be able to judge for themselves the real issue either in the play or in life.

In "The Great Game for Middle East Oil" excerpted from the book *The New Rulers of the World*, Pilger stresses the destructive impact of the Gulf-war, the thing that may look irrelevant but in fact what is said emphasizes that the Iraqi war was planned many years ago for imperialistic reasons. Brigadier General William Hooney, U.S. airforce director of the bombing of Iraq says:

They know we own their country ... we dictate the way they live and talk. And that is what is great about America right now. It's a good thing, especially when there is a lot of oil out there we need(48).

Similarly, Behan stresses the fact that the Iraqi war was conceived in 1992 during the first Bush administration in a 46 page document entitled "Draft Defense Planning Guidance". This document advocated,

the concept of preemptive war to assure the military and diplomatic dominance of the world by the United States. It asserted the need for access to vital raw materials primarily Persian Gulf-Oil and it spoke of threats to U.S. citizens from terrorism" (7).

The so called war on terror is obviously the mask that is used to achieve imperialistic goal. Five years later, as Behan says, a neoconservative organization is created to advocate "preemptive war and U.S. global dominion to achieve a "benevolent hegemony"(8), and this was the project for the New American Century. The dream to invade Iraq was "a tragic anachronism, an ideological fantasy of retrograde imperialism" (Behan 9). The keen interest in Iraqi oil would soon converge to point out the imperialistic motives of this war.

Michael Albert stresses this imperialistic goal that is covered with slogans of freedom, democracy and war on terrorism. The real reason for the invasion is that "Iraq has the second largest oil reserves in the world, very cheap to exploit and lies right at the heart of the world's major hydrocarbon resources" (25). So, Iraq has "a stupendous source of strategic power". Nevertheless, the issue is not only of having access but rather control and power. Albert says:

Control over these sources gives the U.S. "critical leverage over industrial rivals Such control would give the U.S. "Veto power" over others ... Dick Cheney observed that control over energy resources provides "tools of intimidation or blackmail" ... when in the hands of the other...(25).

Zbigniew Brzezinski, one of the more astute of the senior planners and analysts, pointed out in *the Journal National Interest* that "America's control over the Middle East gives it indirect but politically critical leverage on the European and Asian economics that are also dependent on every exports from the region" (qtd in, Chomsky, 25). If America can maintain its control over Iraq, with the world's second largest known oil reserves, and right at the heart of the world's major energy supplies, that will enhance significantly its strategic power and influence over its major rivals in the world. Accordingly, America will dominate "North America, Europe and North East Asia, linked to South and South East Asia economics". (Albert, 25).

To be powerful necessitates the subversive weakening of the other. Chomsky believes that the powerful position of Iran is one of the reasons that encouraged America to invade Iraq. He says:

With a Shi'ite majority, it is likely to continue improving relations with Iran. Sovereignty in Iraq might lead to a loose Shi'ite alliance controlling most of the world's hydrocarbon resources and independent of the U.S., undermining a primary goal of U.S. foreign policy since it became dominant power after world war II (38).

It is not power, or rather super power that dominates the American political scene. In "Inverted Totalitarianism", Sheldon Wolin satirizes America's claims about freedom and democracy "To bring in democracy and bring down a totalitarian regime, America may be moving closer to the latter and further weakening the former"(4). Wolin sees this change as something normal due to "the sudden popularity of two political terms rarely applied earlier to the American political system. "Empire" and "superpower"(4). The two words "Empire" and "superpower" suggest a new system of power that supplanted the old terms of equality, freedom, democracy and human rights. "Empire" and "superpower" stand for the surpassing and subversion of limits and dwarfing of the citizen's rights. So, it is not only a matter of wealth but also of domination. George Kennan, U.S. strategic planner says:

We have 50 percent of the world's wealth but only 6.3 percent of its population. In this situation, our real job in the coming period... to maintain this position of disparity. To do so, we have to dispense with all sentimentality...we should cease thinking about human rights, the raising of living standards and democratization (qtd in Verso, 101).

The mask of humanity should collapse to reveal the imperialistic motives of these powerful countries. What is ironic is that Iraqi war increased the threat of terror while Bush acclaimed that it should be considered as part of "a global war against terror", as the Iraqi Exile says: *How many Iraqis have died? How many civilians? No figure is given. Our dead are uncounted.*" (Hare, *Stuff Happens*, 120). Accordingly, hatred is limitless and attempts of revenge are endless. To remove a dictator innocents are killed in return, and America has become - as John Prados; the national security and intelligence analyst says - a "case study in government dishonesty...that required plenty untrue public statements and egregious manipulation of intelligence"(35).

The previous mentioned reasons explain and justify the powerful motives that drove the U.S. and U.K to try in every possible way to maintain effective control over Iraq. These reasons "violate fundamental doctrines that state power has noble objectives" (Chomsky, 26). Noble objectives could not be realized with the existence of Abu Ghraib prison, a complex building near Baghdad that "was a notorious jail house of the former regime" and became "the main U.S interrogation center... and a World Wide symbol of prisoner abuse and inhuman conditions" (Behan 47). Noble objectives could not be felt when we perceive the kind of weapon used and realize that there was a determination to weaken Iraq and destroy people. According to the report said by Dr. Tawad Al-Ali, a cancer specialist, entitled "The Seeds of Our Death":

Before the war ... we had only three or four deaths in a month from cancer. Now it is thirty to thirty five patients dying every month ... Our studies indicate that 40 to 48 percent of the population in this area will get cancer in five years time (qtd in Pilger, 45).

Add to this, Iraqi doctors are not permitted to get equipment to conduct a proper survey or suitable remedy. The greater sham is the "war on terrorists", as Pilger says, but the real goal is to control and create an obedient client state. This maintains the existence of only one powerful state in the Middle East and stresses America's power. *Stuff Happens* in this way is not just a play but an event through which history can be reinterpreted. The play helps in changing the known facts about the war or at least it helps in making people understand their mistake about this war especially when the opening words of the play are echoed in the audience's ear:

The Inevitable is what will seem to happen to you purely by chance the real is what will strike you as absurd.(2)

To conclude, *Stuff Happens* is not the correct title for invasion is deliberate and destruction is meant. If Hare's *Stuff Happens* takes issue with how the Bush administration went to war in Iraq, a historicist reading of the play answers the why questions which are implied and which Hare himself as he admits feels shame to discuss, namely, the imperialistic identity of both America and England and their arrogant feeling of powerful supremacy.

David Hare's play is a historical event that exposes the current ideology of the age; love of absolute power, control and domination. More importantly, it stresses subversions of the others who are wrongly manipulated, deceived and weakened to be unable to defend their rights. Regardless of the destructive results of the Iraqi war to the Arab world, it is still controlled and led by America – as Lippmann says: "as bewildered herd" (qtd in Chomsky, 37) whose function is to be spectators not participants in action. It is quite reasonable to ascertain that humanitarian considerations and human survival are insignificant in comparison with power, superpower and wealth. It is a reassertion of the Machiavellian principle, "might is right".

If New Historicist critics consider the work of art as a creation of a free author who possesses a unique identity, it is quite important to applaud David Hare for his objectivity and his attempt to reject the tendency to falsify history and criticize power relation in his community and in the world as a whole.

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A New Historicist Reading of David Hare's

"*Stuff Happens*"

(Summary)

New Historicism is one of the most important trends in the recent history of contemporary literary and cultural theory. With Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, new Historicism began to appear in 1980s as another critical return to focusing on the importance of historical context to understand literature. This paper reinterprets Hare's *Stuff-Happens* in the light of New Historicism or rather in the light of non-literary texts to highlight the original ideology of the text. More importantly, the text is treated as an event that has very dangerous implications. With New Historicism, both literary and non-literary texts are equal in importance. Texts are not self-contained but they produce power structure of domination and subordination. Accordingly, the main ideology of *Stuff Happens* is clarified through the interpretation of some extracts taken from "*The New Rulers of the World*". By John Pilger, and *Inverted Totalitarianism*...by Sheldon Wolin. and *The So Called War on Terror* by Richard W. Behan.

To start with, the title of the play is indicative of the American Hubris and of her love of power that is blind of human rights; as George Bush ascertains that he is free to take the decision he likes regardless of the whole world. Nevertheless, this blind desire of power has to be justified to keep the image of America as an example of democracy and liberty; Though Iraq has proved that she does not have any destructive weapons, war is launched and Iraq is destroyed and the implied question of the play is: "Why this war!!".

The answer is presented in the non – literary texts "*The New Rulers of the World*", in which Verso ascertains that it is because of oil; especially when there is a lot of oil out there and America needs. Control over these sources gives America power, supreme power. Iraqi war is launched to destroy and weaken the power of Iran and maintain the existence of one powerful country in the Middle East; Israel. Chomsky stresses the imperialistic motives of this war. Subversion of the other is quite obvious, the thing that stresses the responsibility of the Arabs for this destructive war that maintains that "*might is right*".

قراءة تاريخية جديدة لمسرحية ديفيدهير

" كل شيء يحدث "

إن التاريخية الجديدة هى أحد أهم الاتجاهات الحديثة فى الأدب الحديث والنظريات الثقافية ؛ ويعد كتاب حرين بلات " إعادة بناء عصر النهضة " بمثابة البداية التى انطلقت منها التاريخية الجديدة . فى الثمانينات حيث تركّز على أهمية كل من النص الأدبى وغير الأدبى ؛ وحيث يتم تفسير النص الأدبى من خلال النصوص النظرية : وعلاوة على ذلك فإن التاريخية الجديدة تعامل النص الأدبى كحدث تاريخى له كثير من المعانى الخطيرة.

فلا تعتبر التاريخية الجديدة النص الأدبى مستقلاً بذاته بل هو أساس فى تفسير القوة والخضوع السائدين فى مجتمع ما . ومن ثم فإن الأيدلوجية الأساسية لمسرحية " كل شيء يحدث " تتضح بشكل واضح من خلال تفسير بعض الأجزاء المهمة المأخوذة من "حكام العالم الجديد" لجون بلجر ، " الشمولية المعكوسة " لشيلدون فولسن ، " الحرب المزعومة على الإرهاب" لريتشارد بيهان . .

بداية ... يعكس عنوان المسرحية " كل شيء يحدث " بشكل واضح سمة أساسية فى المجتمع الأمريكى ألا وهى الغرور والقوة العمياء التى تتجاهل حقوق الإنسان وذلك من خلال تأكيد أمريكا المستمر على حريتها فى أن تفعل ما تريد . ولكن وتمشياً مع السياسة والدعاية الأمريكية التى تركّز على الادعاء بالدفاع عن الديمقراطية فإنها تحاول أن تنتزع اعترافاً دولياً أو موافقة دولية بضرورة الحرب. وتنتهى الحرب بتدمير كامل للعراق وهنا يتساءل الكاتب لماذا الحرب ؟

وإذ ينجح ديفيدهير فى عرض " كيف دمرت العراق ؟؟؛ فإن المقالات النظرية تجيب عن السؤال " لماذا دمرت العراق ؟؟ . يرى فيرسو - من خلال كتاب حكام العالم الجديد - أن السبب الأول هو وجود كميات كبيرة من البترول . علاوة على هذا فإن السيطرة على مصادر القوة تمنح أمريكا نوعاً من القوة أو القوة العظمى التى تمكنها من سيادة العالم . أضف إلى ذلك أن الحرب هى محاولة لإضعاف الآخر وبالأخص إيران ومن تساعدهم من الشيعة وذلك لضمان وجود دولة وحيدة قوية فى منطقة الشرق الأوسط ألا وهى إسرائيل .

هذه الأسباب مجتمعة تدفع تشومسكى أن يؤكد على الدوافع الاستعمارية لهذه الحرب ولكنه بدوره يؤكد على الضعف الواضح فى الآخر - العرب - الشيء الذى يؤكد مسئوليتهم عن ضياع أوطانهم . وهو نفس الشيء الذى يؤكد ديفيد هير حيث يقول فى نهاية المسرحية " لا تتوقع أن تقوم أمريكا أو أى فرد بعمل شيء لك ، فما لم تفعله بنفسك لن تحصل عليه " .

A New Historicist Reading of David Hare's

Stuff Happens

(Abstract)

This paper reinterprets Hare's *Stuff Happens* in the light of New Historicism. This means that to reinterpret the play in the light of non-literary texts to highlight the original ideology of the text. If the play presents how Bush and his administration did invade Iraq, the non-literary texts answer the question raised by Hare, why this war is waged? The New Historicist reading of the play stresses the imperialistic identity of America and England. It stresses the ideology of the age; love of power and domination and the subversion of others who are wrongly manipulated.

قراءة تاريخية جديدة لمسرحية ديفيد هير

" كل شيء يحدث "

يقدم هذا البحث قراءة لمسرحية ديفيد هير " كل شيء يحدث " فى ضوء نظرية التاريخية الجديدة . وهذا يعنى أن تفسر هذه المسرحية من خلال إلقاء الضوء على بعض النصوص غير الأدبية بغرض إبراز المغزى الأيديولوجى التى يريد أن يبرزه هير . وإذا كانت المسرحية تستعرض بشكل واضح السياسة الأمبريالية لكل من أمريكا وإنجلترا فإن التاريخية الجديدة تساعدنا على إبراز اهم أيديولوجيات هذا العصر ألا وهو حب القوة والسيطرة وإضعاف الآخر وإساءة التعامل معه .